

Written Testimony on Michigan HB 4524
Submitted by Lawrence Abramson, DO
House Committee on Health Policy
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Chairman Haines and distinguished members of the Michigan House Committee on Health Policy, my name is Lawrence Abramson and I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony concerning HB 4525. I write in support of the proposed legislation and encourage the committee to vote yes on this bill.

I am an osteopathic family physician and as part of that responsibility I have always strived to serve as a patient advocate. My work has involved ensuring access to affordable, safe, and high quality healthcare. To ensure such access, it is critical that the providers of the care have the appropriate education, training and experience relevant to the patient's needs. The complexity of providing care and the emergence of worker shortages in certain disciplines, such as family primary care physicians, has led to a reliance on a variety of other practitioners to provide healthcare services. Often patients are unaware of the professional education, training, professional degree, or other qualifications of the individual providing care. Patients frequently assume that an individual wearing a "white coat" is a physician. Indeed, patients have reported recommendations for their care indicating they received the direction from a physician when, after investigation, the provider was in a different discipline. This leads to risks and discontinuity of care.

With the emerging increase in access to healthcare benefits, with the advent of concepts of team-based medical care as exemplified in the Patient-Centered Medical Home, and the ever-changing new therapeutic modalities that have prolonged life with better management of multiple chronic diseases, it is imperative that patients and their caregivers providing support, have the ability to accurately determine the profession or specific discipline of a Michigan licensed or registered healthcare provider.

The proposed change at Section 16221 (d) (i) concerning false, fraudulent, deceptive or misleading statements in solicitation or advertising for patients in relation to the practice of a profession is an excellent specification replacing the more general subject as currently enacted and the new language should be strongly supported.

The proposed addition of Section 16221A provides for improved patient protections based on ensuring identification of the healthcare provider and their specific license or registration. However, a few concerns arise. (1) A does not provide any parameters for what constitutes "recent" for a photograph. Since the legislation would require a new identification card, badge or similar device that includes the license or registration expiry date, it would seem prudent to require the change of photo to reflect a similar timeline. (1) C requires the type of license or registration. Since the intent of the legislation is to ensure disclosure to patients of the

practitioner's discipline, the legislation should prohibit the use of any abbreviations in the identification of the discipline because often the lay public may not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the meaning of many abbreviations currently used by professionals.

A final concern arises in 16221A (4). Increasingly professionals have become non-managing employees of healthcare systems or other entities and lack any control over advertising, promotional activities, printed or published materials, directories and similar related materials. The proposed legislation fails to make this requirement binding on an employer of the healthcare licensee or registrant. In the committee's deliberations I encourage consideration to make employers of these individuals comport with the intentions of the bill, if appropriate within this bill or, if necessary by referencing the requirement in other extant public acts regulating these entities.

For the reasons above I respectfully encourage the committee to vote in support of HB 4524 and consider the concerns outlined above. I appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments to the committee.